

Samuel Sharpe Worksheet -Task 1

Highlight in the description of the Christmas Uprising the things that contributed to the successful organisation of the strike.

Colour code the text to evidence the contributing factors listed below

Colour key	What did it take to resist?
	Determination / Faith
	Leadership skills
	Organising in secrecy
	Connecting many different groups of people across Jamaica

The Christmas Uprising of 1831-1832

Samuel Sharpe was a self-educated Baptist Deacon on the island of Jamaica, who was permitted to travel around the island to lead prayer. He observed the hardships suffered by the many. At age 31 he decided to use this freedom to organise a strike for better conditions. After a meeting in mid December 1831, Samuel asked community members to promise on the Bible that they would support this action. Samuel travelled the island recruiting groups who would be involved in the strike. The sugar plantations system in Jamaica had a hierarchy of workers. These groups included people who received comparatively good treatment, but Samuel's intelligence and communication skills convinced them to join the strike. In turn other workers on the plantations also agreed to strike alongside them. Some workers had large frame houses with wooden floors, ideal for planning meetings and for storing weapons in case the strike became violent.

The Christmas Uprising of 1831-1832 (continued)

Samuel Sharpe knew about past rebellions on the Caribbean islands, and the importance of secrecy. He asked followers to swear an oath to an act of resistance, united in faith and secrecy. Samuel enlisted experienced workers such as blacksmiths, carpenters and head sugar boilers. House servants, field plantation workers and cargo ship workers formed a communication network. They knew about the movement of troops and the latest government orders throughout the Island. Women acted as lookouts and go-betweens.

The risks were huge. It was common for men and women on Jamaican plantations to be beaten viciously. Witnesses even told of pregnant women being flogged with a cart whip ten feet long. The punishment for uprising was execution, the heads of rebels were displayed on stakes to give this message.

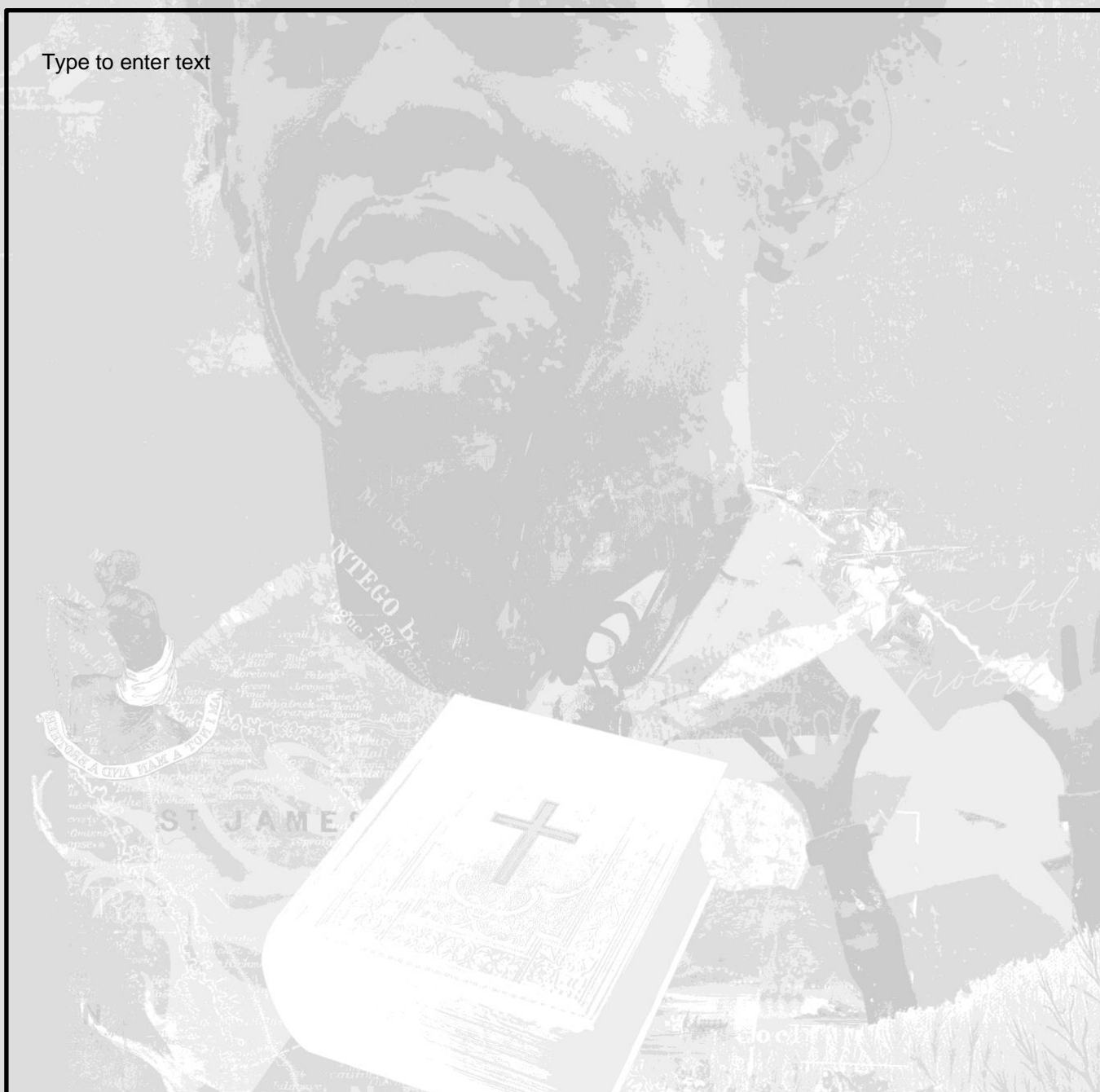
When the demands of Samuel Sharpe and his followers were refused, an uprising began. Plantation houses were burnt as signals across the island, 145 were destroyed in total. More than twenty thousand men and women seized control over 750 square miles and more than one million pounds in damage was caused. It took almost all of January 1832 for British troops to suppress the uprising and arrest Samuel Sharpe.

Over 500 enslaved people were convicted, many of those were executed. Those who escaped the death penalty were treated brutally. Records show many of the women involved received hundreds of lashes with a whip or were transported to another island. Samuel Sharpe was named as the key figure behind the uprising, he was captured and hanged in Montego Bay in May 1832.

Worksheet Task 2 - Source A

What does Source A tell us about Samuel Sharpe's faith in the rebellion?

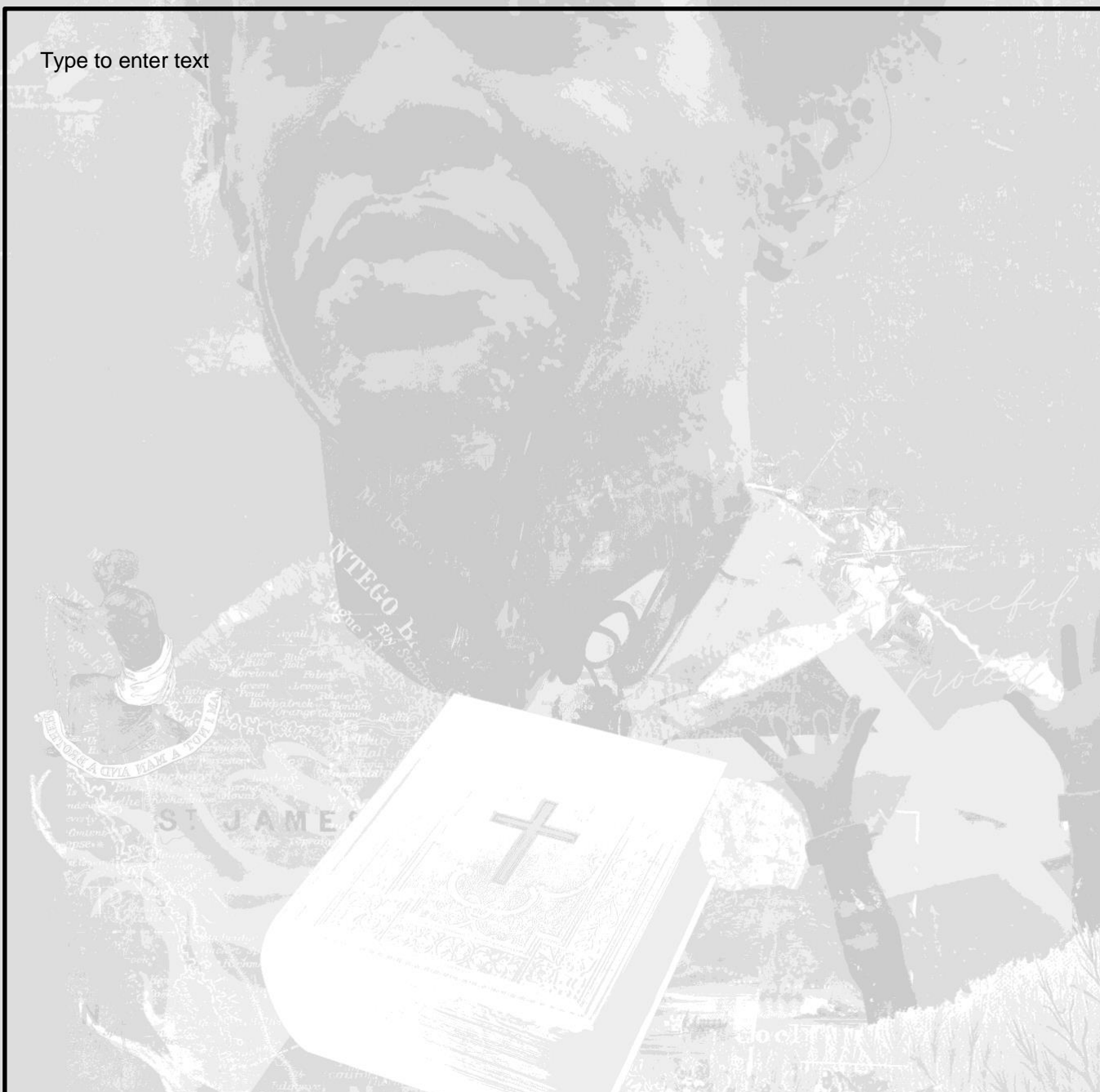
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Worksheet Task 2 - Source A

What can Source A tell us about why Sharpe was seen by many in Jamaica as a powerful leader?

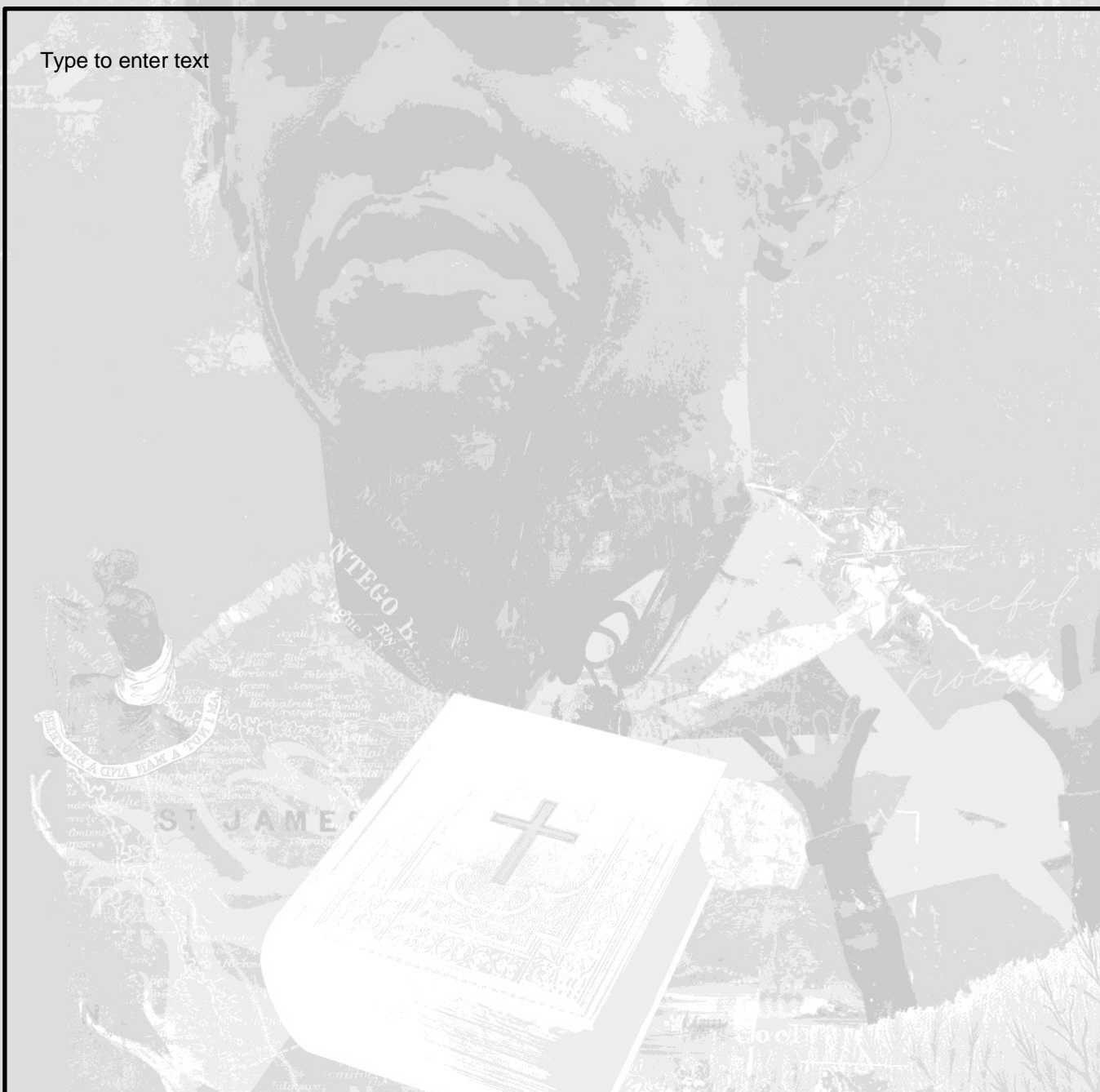
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Worksheet Task 2 - Source B

What does Source B tell us about rebellions on the island of Jamaica?

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Worksheet Task 2 - Source B

Why might some people find Source B surprising?

Type to enter text

